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# Airport screening tightened

Hardeep Singh Puri, Minister of State (I/C), Civil Aviation, has advised travellers to voluntarily get themselves checked for COVID-19, in case they have any symptoms of the disease, which has now been declared a pandemic.



Nisha Verma

Addressing a press conference on the COVID-19 issue, Hardeep Singh Puri revealed that screening of passengers coming from all parts of the world is currently being carried on at 30 Indian airports and 6,49,452 passengers had been screened till March 6, 2020. He said, "My advice to everyone, whether they have

gone as a tourist or have come to India as part of a tour group, if they have symptoms, they should get themselves checked. While the number of cases of COVID-19 in India is not very high, we can't afford to take chances. If someone came in before the universal checking of all passengers at airports started, they should come forward for a check in case of any symptoms. Some people have

✦ If someone came in before the universal checking of all passengers started, they should come forward in case of symptoms ✦

been identified already, and if they show any signs, they will be immediately tested. We are

taking all external precautions needed, and the cabinet secretary is taking meetings every day. Under the overall control of PMO, and the PM personally, we have two groups—one is a group of ministers headed by Dr Harsh Vardhan, of which I am a member. There is another group headed by the Cabinet Secretary, which is taking regular meetings with all related ministries including Health,

Defence, External Affairs, Civil Aviation, Home, Textiles, Commerce, Pharmaceuticals and other officials, including State Chief Secretaries. Each of these groups meet many times to take stock of the situation. It's a case where all parts of the government are active and in 24-hour contact with each other. He insisted that all concerned agencies are working in cooperation with each other. ✦



Hardeep Singh Puri  
Minister of State (I/C)  
Civil Aviation

# MOT voices trade concern on TCS



Rupinder Brar  
Additional Director General  
Ministry of Tourism

Rupinder Brar, Addl. Director General (ADG), Tourism, shares that they are voicing the industry's concerns on TCS to Finance Ministry and updating their website on COVID-19.



TT Bureau

Rupinder Brar says that while MOT is taking up the issue of TCS with the Ministry of Finance, they are also updating information regarding COVID-19 and re-

lated advisories on their website for travellers and tour operators.

She shared, "On behalf of the tour operators, we are definitely bringing it before the Ministry of Finance that this measure is a lit-

tle harsh and it's for us to voice the concerns of the industry. We have done that and we will continue our dialogue with the MOF to find a common dialogue and see how we can resolve the concerns of the tour operators."

Apart from that she agreed that COVID-19 issue and its effect on travel is serious. "We have been putting out all the advisories that have been brought out by the Ministry of Health and Ministry of External Affairs on our website,

which clearly gives out the status of COVID-19 for anyone planning a trip to and from India. Also, I should say that the screening at the airports and sea-ports is robust to ensure that the spread can be avoided," she said. ✦

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# IATO elections on April 25

The Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) has announced its biennial elections, which will take place on April 25, 2020 at 10:30 am at The Ashok Hotel, New Delhi. The last date for filing nominations is March 19.

 Manas Dwivedi

At the recently held interactive luncheon meeting of IATO, **Rajesh Mudgill**, Hony Secretary, IATO shared details about the association's upcoming elections. "The last date for filing the nominations is March 19, 2020, while the withdrawal of nominations can be done latest by 3 pm on

The nomination form for contesting the elections can only be proposed and seconded by active members. Only the authorised person, who is representing the company in IATO, would be eligible to propose, second or contest for the elections," said Mudgill.

In addition, **Pronab Sarkar**, President, IATO, addressed the



President, IATO, said, "The Bureau of Civil Aviation Security,

bureau is working to formulate a new mechanism for passes and sought support of IATO in training the applicants of the passes. Apart from this, IndiGo has introduced daily non-stop flights on Agra-Varanasi, Agra-Bhopal and Agra-Lucknow route w.e.f. March 29, 2020. Members are requested to make use of these new flights and promote IndiGo."



March 24, 2020. The Returning Officer for the election is Akshay Kumar, CEO, Mercury Himalayan Explorations, and all further correspondence for the elections will be made by him.

members and shared the highlights about his two consecutive terms. Sharing updates on airline-related matters, validity of Airport Entry Passes and other issues, **Rajiv Mehra**, Vice

Government of India, has extended the validity of Airport Entry Passes for tour operators till March 31, 2020. No new passes will be issued till the time new guidelines are issued. The

IATO also invited **SC Kamra**, Advocate and GST Consultant for IATO, for clearing doubts and queries of members on tax-related issues and inform them about the new TCS proposed by the Finance Minister in the Union Budget 2020-21. The amendments will be effective from April 1, 2020.

According to a formal document by IATO, as per the decision of the Annual General Meeting, the provisional accounts for the financial year 2019-20 will be presented by the Chartered Accountant for approval of the general body before election begins. ↴

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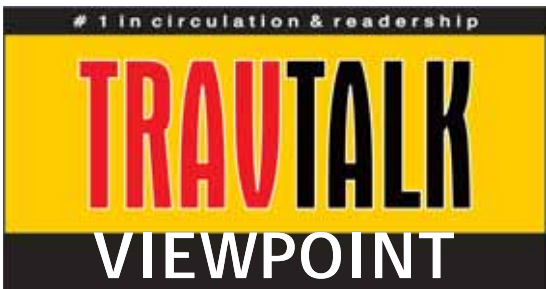


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# The business of sales calls

Follow-ups for salespeople is the best tool for converting a sales call into business. While most sales professionals give up after three to four follow-ups, it would be interesting to note that one can actually close a deal after the fifth follow-up.

## TCS remains a stress

The outbound travel market is leaving no stone unturned to convince Government of India that the newly introduced TCS 206 (C) section would sabotage their business. Travel agents and outbound tour operators are running from pillar to post in order to give their representation to various ministries and government bodies, to make them understand what they stand to lose in a scenario if this tax regime comes into effect. The Ministry of Tourism is also working to communicate the issue to the Ministry of Finance. However, no response has come from the finance ministry as yet. Travel trade is pushing the envelope in every way possible — right from social media to calling out SOS meetings of associations and going for multiple visits to government offices. The point they want to put forward is that while the package cost will increase by 10-15%, they will also lose their business to foreign companies and OTAs. While there is still time for the Budget to be officially implemented, the travel trade is hopeful of getting some relief.

## Will domestic travel soar?

WHO has officially declared coronavirus or COVID-19 as a pandemic, a bigger reason why governments around the world are advising their citizens to avoid international travel for safety concerns. While India remained comparatively unaffected till earlier this month, the travel industry, including the Ministry of Tourism, is pinning its hope on domestic travel under the ‘Dekho Apna Desh’ banner. However, in the last 15 days, cases in India are on a rise across many regions, which has now diminished the scope of domestic travel as well. However, domestic airlines are still trying to lure people to travel by offering discounts and offers every day. In fact, with India closing its borders for travel to and from the country, domestic travel remains the most viable option for everyone. The point of contention here is how much people are willing to travel in times where they are even scared of stepping out of their homes?

**Follow-ups close more sales**  
If you are a sales professional, whether in inbound space or doing corporate sales, emails form a major part of your daily life. Seldom do we get to close sales by sending a single email.

We send an email and we wait for a revert. If we don't get one, we follow up. Follow-ups, despite being the most boring part of a sales routine, is the most critical.

As data suggests, most sales professionals give up after 3-4 follow-ups and conversions usually happen after the fifth one. The question naturally arises why sales professionals give up on follow-ups when they are so critical to closing sales?

Nine out of 10 salespeople, who were asked this question, said it slipped their mind or they just forgot. There are excellent solutions for doing your sales follow-

✂ Data suggests, most sales professionals give up after 3-4 follow ups and conversions usually happen after the fifth one. There are excellent solutions for sales follow-ups ✂

up on autopilot. It is a set it-forget it way and it brings results. Sales follow-ups can be automated. As

most salespeople would tell you, in majority of cases, the messages that they send for follow-ups are repetitive and similar in nature. By writing a pre-configured sequence to be sent on set days, if the prospect does not reply, and attaching it to your email, you can set it and forget it.

The sales follow-up tool works on reply detection. Until it does not detect a reply, it would keep on following up, or till such time that the sequence finishes off. I usually recommend a 10-step sequence spread over 3-4 weeks in most of the cases.

Most of these tools have been designed to work on G Suite/ Gmail and some do work with

Microsoft Exchange or Office 365 (If that is where your email is hosted). Most of these tools also have email tracking built-in to let you know when your email has been read. You also get a free trial to check these tools out.

(The views expressed are the author's own. The publication may or may not subscribe to the same.)



Vishal Mehra  
Managing Partner - Acquisitions  
Roaring Representations

# Hotel industry takes a hit

January 2020 witnessed a month-on-month drop in ADR, occupancy and RevPAR according to HVS' monthly newsletter titled 'Hotels & Hospitality Overview India'. Both ADR and RevPAR fell short by more than two per cent, month on month.

Going by HVS ANAROCK's recent analysis on the hotel sector in India in a report titled 'Hotels & Hospitality Overview India', in the month of January 2020, while ADR for the top 13 markets in India stood at approximately ₹6,560, average RevPAR was recorded at ₹4,620.

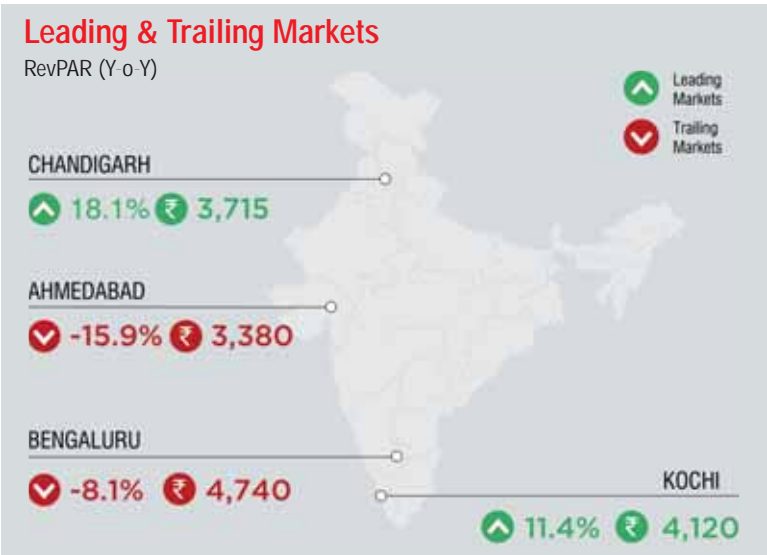
Occupancy for the month stood at 70.5 per cent. The report also notes that all three indicators – ADR, occupancy and RevPAR – had dropped in the month-on-month analysis, all three had gained in a year-on-year comparison, though marginally so.

### Leading & trailing markets

The year-on-year analysis of the 13 markets in India reveals that Chandigarh and Kochi recorded growth in RevPAR at 18.1 per cent (standing at ₹3,715) and 11.4 per cent (standing at ₹4,120), respectively. Ahmedabad and Bengaluru witnessed a drop in RevPAR numbers by 15.9 per cent (standing at ₹3,380) and 8.1 per cent (standing at ₹4,740), respectively.

Hotel performance in India was muted in the month of January 2020 primarily because of some political unrest in the country as well as news of the COVID-19 outbreak. Chandigarh, however, witnessed double-digit RevPAR growth primarily due to increased demand from MICE.

Hotel Sector	Jan 2020	M-o-M (%)	Y-o-Y (%)
Key Stats (Top 13 Markets in India)			
ADR	₹6,560	-2.09	0.83
Occupancy	70.5%	-0.15	0.50
RevPAR	₹4,620	-2.23	1.34



Source: HVS - Hotels & Hospitality Overview India



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# pulls out all stops for TCS

An OTOAI delegation led by President **Riaz Munshi** made a representation to **Rupinder Brar**, ADG, Ministry of Tourism and presented a detailed letter on TCS.



Manas Dwivedi

OTOAI is working hard to increase the dialogue with concerned authorities to discuss the matter of TCS and apprise them about the consequences of the tax regime on the outbound travel market. After making the first representation regarding the TCS amendments proposed in the Finance Bill 2020, an OTOAI delegation called upon the Ministry of Tourism to apprise them about the situation and consequences of TCS on the outbound tourism market.

The representation was well received by the ADG and she has assured that OTOAI's representation will be forwarded to Ministry of Finance, Government of India, with Ministry of Tourism's recommendations.

Such an exercise can, at best, contribute a very small amount to the kitty at a huge cost to the business and is wholly avoidable

In the letter presented to Brar to withdraw the provisions of TCS on tour operators, OTOAI said that in their business, competition is huge, margins are very thin, and there are lots of uncertainties. "This additional burden would impose huge costs, would require deployment of extra staff, maintenance of accounts, filing of returns and then matching all the figures. All these requirements require capacity building, developing capability incurring huge costs,

at a time when the industry is reeling under crisis and can ill afford. This would rather result in heavy slow-down of their business affecting employment instead. The new provision has come at the worst possible time, when the world economy is reeling under

a serious crisis of COVID-19 scare and airlines, hotels, logistics and transportation and all other related businesses are facing a huge crisis, with layoff of workers and negative growth in the industry," said Munshi in the letter. "In such a scenario, many



(From L-R): Shrawan Bhalla, Riaz Munshi, Guldeep Singh Sahni and Raghuvinder Singh with Rupinder Brar, ADG, Ministry of Tourism

tour operators may be forced to close down their business, resulting in loss of business

and employment. Such an exercise can, at best, contribute a very small amount to the

kitty at a huge cost to the business and is wholly avoidable," he further said.

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IMEX Frankfurt, one of the largest annual trade exhibitions for the meetings, conventions, events and incentive travel industry, has been cancelled, due to the coronavirus outbreak.



# COVID-19: Impact and recovery

Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism and Hospitality (FAITH) has been regularly sharing updates with the Ministry of Tourism (MOT) and Prime Minister's Office (PMO) on the impact of COVID-19 on the industry. The association recommends the utilisation of this time for creating a tourism strategy revival.



Nisha Verma

FAITH has written to MOT and the PMO to apprise the government on the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak till now, and has been sending updates to them almost every fortnight since the outbreak was declared a global emergency.

The letter reads, "This is one of the worst crisis ever to hit the Indian tourism industry, impacting all its geographical seg-

*This will be the time for India to start its global tourism strategy revival and target even those tourist source markets that were travelling to our competing nations*

ments - inbound, outbound and domestic, and almost all tourism verticals - leisure, adventure, heritage, MICE, cruise, corporate and other niche segments. The whole tourism value chain across hotels, travel agents, tour operators, destinations, restaurants, family entertainment venues, as well as air, land and sea transportation has been affected."

## The letter also mentions:

❖ Inbound tourism of more than \$28 billion in value accounts for almost 60-65% of the total between October and March. As the news of the virus started picking up from November, the percentage of cancellations in this segment started going up exponentially, and is reaching a peak of almost 80% in March in many Indian locations. The value at risk from this segment will be in multiples of tens of thousands of crores.

❖ Forward bookings for October 2020-March 2021, which should have started picking up, are muted. These are showing highly discouraging signs with cancellations of important global travel fairs, which are marketplaces for contracting for the next season.

❖ The value of NRI segment from developed markets, whose major season for visit is families and relatives, is around 60% during April to September. There are reports of large-scale forward cancellations from these, and unless the progression of the virus stops, almost the entire value for the remainder of 2020 season is at risk.

❖ The holiday season of Indians, both for travelling within the country and outside it, is heavy from April to July and from October to December. More than 28 million Indians are estimated to have

travelled outside in 2019 and there were almost 1.8 billion domestic tourist footfalls. The December holiday season of 2019 took an estimated hit of almost 40-50%; the holiday season of April to July 2020 is likely to take a hu-



mongous hit, too, which could be as high as 80-100% unless there is positive news of the progression of the virus decreasing. There are advanced cancellations and highly reduced forward-booking pipelines for the holiday season. Only corporates are flying and that, too, only on highly essential same-day travel.

Most MNCs are advising work from home.

❖ Cruise tourism of all kinds has come to a complete standstill with no clearances.

❖ Unexpected no-shows are happening and most group meetings and celebrations have been cancelled. Even eating out at restaurants is coming under serious pressure.

❖ To save on variable costs and minimise fixed costs, many small and mid-sized hotels, resorts and car rental companies are shutting down operations and asking staff to go on leave without pay.

❖ Most Indian travel and hospitality companies are facing demands for full refunds and they are doing so out of their cash reserves, even for which they have paid advance tax & GST.

❖ Working capital of most tourism corporates is hit by almost 60% and for micro, small and medium tourism enterprises by almost 80%. Margins are nil or negligible in many cases.

If there ever was a time for the Central and state governments and the tourism industry to stand together, this is it. The employees, managers and entrepreneurs are bravely fighting for survival at the front line and need an umbrella cover of relief and support from the Central and state government. Once the virus stops progressing and as the domestic traveller will start returning upon seeing such confidence-building measures, the global traveller will also be enthused. This will be the time for India to start its global tourism strategy revival and target even those tourist source markets that were travelling to our competing nations. 🇮🇳

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Tourism  
Breaking News

■ All regular visas to India suspended till 15<sup>th</sup> April

■ Genting Dream to start sailing out of Singapore from 27<sup>th</sup> March

■ Mayfair to open India's first boutique tea resort in Siliguri in 2020

■ ATM postponed; new dates from June 28 to July 1, 2020

■ Kerala records 1.96 crore domestic and foreign arrivals in 2019, highest since 1996

■ HICSA postponed; to be held from July 22-23, 2020

■ TUI offers benefits worth ₹ 4,000 for Maldives

# ITB starts processing refunds

David Ruetz, Head, ITB Berlin, shares that the cancellation of the prestigious event was unfortunate, but refunds will be processed. Also, a new networking platform— itb.com has been launched to offer digital services 365 days a year for the travel industry around the world.



Nisha Verma

ITB Berlin, the prestigious annual travel trade event held in Germany, was cancelled for the year 2020 in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak. There were a lot of questions emerging after the show was cancelled, especially regarding the refunds and rental fee. Addressing the matter, David Ruetz, Head, ITB Berlin, says, "For all main exhibitors of ITB Berlin 2020, the advance payment of the stand rental fee, exhibitor tickets and AUMA fee will be refunded. All trade visitor passes for ITB Berlin ordered and paid via the ITB Berlin ticket shop will be refunded. The same applies to the public visitor tickets of ITB Berlin 2020."

The booths at the exhibition were already under construction when the cancellation was

announced, which has resulted in losses. Ruetz shares, "The booth designers usually start working one week prior to the show. By the time the cancellation was announced, 40 percent of the stands had already been constructed. We are expecting considerable damage overall, not only for us as a trade fair company, but also for Berlin and the entire travel industry. Due to the timing of the cancellation, we ask for your understanding that all detailed questions regarding ITB Berlin and its subsidiaries must be checked first."

Many people from the industry feel that the decision to call off the show was taken too last minute. However, Ruetz feels, "Messe Berlin has been pointing out for weeks that the decision to hold or cancel major events can only be made

according to the recommendation or instruction of the relevant authorities. Only these authorities have the necessary information



David Ruetz  
Head, ITB Berlin

and expertise to draw the right conclusions. The responsible public health authority of Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf of Berlin had greatly increased the requirements for holding the event in the early evening (18:27 pm CET, February 28, 2020)."

He feels that the tourism industry needs ITB more than ever. "ITB is offering digital services 365 days a year by launching itb.com. We are establishing a completely new networking platform for the world's travel industry.

ITB is offering digital services 365 days a year by launching itb.com. We are establishing a new networking platform for the world's travel industry

It spans a bridge between real-life meetings and digital networking, and features innovative tools for business, networking and exclusive content.

Hence, at the forward-looking events of the ITB Virtual Convention, leading speakers from ITB will be discussing how the world's travel industry can harness intelligent strategies to make sure it remains future-proof," shared Ruetz.

He added, "We also wanted to give our partners the opportunity to communicate about all the events they have been planning for the week (4-8 March) away from the Berlin Exhibition Grounds. Exhibitors were asked to send us the information about their planned event. Everyone who had news to share with the industry at ITB Berlin 2020 was asked to share the messages on Instagram, LinkedIn, Facebook or Twitter using the hashtag: #whatwewanted-tosayITB."

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## 140 buyers at Btm 20

The fifth edition of the Bengal Travel Mart was a brilliant showcase for the promotion of tourism destinations in the state and its neighbouring countries as well.



Vani Sunder

Held at Montana Vista in Siliguri, West Bengal, from February 22-24, 2020, the event brought together tourism stakeholders from pan India, including West Bengal and its neighbouring states like Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh. Around 120-140 buyers from across

and West Bengal in particular. Sandipan Ghosh, General Secretary, Eastern Himalaya Travel & Tour Operators Association (EHTTOA), said, "What is encouraging is that for the first time, we have participation in big numbers from Nepal and Bangladesh. This would further give a boost to cross-border tourism promotion."

Pradesh & Odisha, Sikkim were the state participants. Nepal Tourism Board, Pokhara Tourism Council, Tour Operators Association of Bangladesh were the international partners, while IATO, ADTOI, ETAA, JTWA were the association partners of the event. The highlight of the event was the signing of a MoU between EHTTOA (Eastern Himalaya



India gathered at this event that hosted 80 to 90 domestic and 40 to 50 international buyers from Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh, and some European nations who got an opportunity to interact with the local stakeholders of the eastern Himalaya region in general,

Major hotel chains like Marriott, MayFair, Sterling Holidays, Summit Hotels, Waxpol, Golden Hotels, Pride Hotels, Jagjeet Hotels and Resorts, Yangthang Group of Hotels, Pine Tree Group, Anand Palace, were present at the event. Bengal, Gujarat, Tripura, Madhya

Travel and Tour Operators Association) and TOAB (Tour Operators Association of Bangladesh) to promote cross border tourism. The mart also focused on promotion of homestays, which have mushroomed across North Bengal and Sikkim.





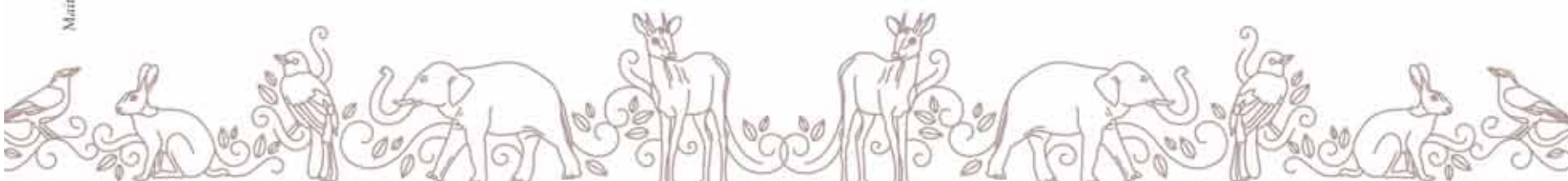
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# Singapore & Sheeraz woo UP

Singapore Tourism Board along with Sheeraz Tours organised a product update session in Lucknow, which witnessed the attendance of over 100 tour operators and agencies from Lucknow, Kanpur and Prayagraj. The event was supported by TripShapers.com, Resorts World Singapore, Dream Cruises, Royal Caribbean International and TIRUN Travel Marketing.



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## Right 'Connect' to success

Eastbound Group's latest initiative — Eastbound Connect — is dedicated to empower and enlighten its partners and help them achieve success in the dynamic and ever-changing travel industry.

Nisha Verma

Eastbound Group kicked off its 'Eastbound Connect' series recently, which had Dr. Arokiaswamy Velumani, CEO & Founder, Thyrocare, as the first speaker for the experiential trade engagement event series. The first event happened at Hotel Le Meridien, Gurgaon, which saw a full house, where attendees listened to the thought-provoking session titled 'Focus, Learn, Grow & Enjoy', where the speaker cited examples from his inspirational journey led by determination, belief and consistency. **Amit Kishore**, Co-founder and Director at Eastbound Group, said, "Eastbound Connect series is about the responsibility we take as a stakeholder of the travel industry and the importance we see in collaborative development. It is very heartening



**Amit Kishore**  
Co-founder and Director  
Eastbound Group

that we opened and closed to a full house in the first chapter itself. The event portfolio would eventually include multiple areas of knowledge, skill and leadership development."

Added Prithviraj Singh, Co-founder & Director at Eastbound Group, "It's an individual commitment to a group effort, that is what makes it a teamwork, a company work, an industry

work and a society work. This is our endeavour as a group to expand our circle of influence and present an industry platform for learning and networking."

✦ The portfolio would eventually include areas of knowledge, skill and leadership development ✦

Kishore also said that while this was the first such event, they will try to take it to other cities in future. "We'd like to take the series to Mumbai as well as Chennai and Bengaluru. However, most of our in-house team and clients are in Delhi, and hence a large part of the series will happen here," he shared. ✦



*The Indian government has decided not to let any cruise ship from any foreign destination dock at any of its port. The measure has been taken keeping in mind the growing threat of COVID-19.*



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Red Carpet Travels



# 52 Accor hotels count on India

With two big openings in India soon, Accor has pinned its hopes on the India market, especially after the resounding success it saw for the fourth edition of its Accor Showcase 2020 in Mumbai and New Delhi. The events were attended by 52 global properties of Accor, conducting meetings with over 1,000 trade professionals.



Hazel Jain

Organised consecutively for four years, Accor Showcase has acted as a catalyst for the growth of both inbound and outbound customers. In 2020 as well, the Accor Showcase saw an enormous response from the travel fraternity in New Delhi and Mumbai. Its fourth edition saw participation from 52 Accor properties globally. The hotel representatives interacted with more than 1,000 tourism leaders at Pullman New Delhi Aerocity on February 26 and Sofitel Mumbai BKC on February 28, 2020.

This year as well, the roadshow saw positive conversions for many participants, especially for Baku, Turkey and London. Many corporates, travel partners, wedding planners, travel agents, airline partners and



Kerrie Hannaford  
VP, Commercial, India & South Asia

others attended the event. Luxury and leisure segments being key aspects for Accor, created a buzz at the showcase.

The most awaited brand, Raffles, also attracted conversation amongst the participants. Also, the upcoming Fairmont in Mumbai was discussed amongst the industry peers. The all-new loyalty programme, ALL- Accor Live Limitless and its offerings was also a highlight.

Kerrie Hannaford, VP, Commercial, Accor India and South Asia, said, "We have received extraordinary response from the Indian



Rohit Chopra  
Regional Director Sales, India

market. We were a little nervous because the world at the moment lives in uncertain times. India is probably one of the most resilient markets. It is very much a domestic market, with huge outbound flow as well. You can see the robustness of the Indian market because instead of cancelling their

conference, they continue with their plans but are now booking in India. The wedding market was

India is probably one of the most resilient markets; it is very much a domestic market, with huge outbound flow as well

— Kerrie Hannaford

phenomenal in 2019 and it continues to be strong even in March 2020, as does corporate travel."

Opening soon is the Grand Mercure in Bengaluru, followed by Raffles in Udaipur by mid-2020. "This is truly our first exclusive luxury property opening for the Indian market – the first Raffles for India and we are so excited about it. It is a whole new level of luxury



coming up on a private island," Hannaford added.

Rohit Chopra, Regional Director Sales - India, Accor, said, "For this show, we had hotels from different categories. We have multiple Raffles and Fairmonts from different countries, and they are looking to tap the MICE and wedding segments. This year, we had participants from Azerbaijan, London, North Europe as well as representatives from USA global sales, so it's a very proud moment for us that we are being looked at as an import point of sale by all of them. For the first time, we went for online registrations and in both

cities, over 250 people pre-registered for it. The Accor Showcase has truly built up its reputation in last four years."

On marketing plans, he added, "We are looking at more communication with the partners, more tie-ups, more client engagements, people beyond the road, on all different platforms, we are looking at business with a more segment-wise, focused approach. The entire world is looking towards India and that is a positive sign. We look forward to seeing more growth in India as well."

## Fact File

Accor has, under its umbrella, more than 39 brands, ranging from luxury to economy. The group has 5,000 hotels spread across 110 countries.

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## TIPs from Tourism NZ

Tourism New Zealand and Immigration New Zealand have launched their latest brand campaign, as well as an extension of the Tourism Industry Partnership (TIP) programme.



Manas Dwivedi

Called '100% Pure Welcome – 100% Pure New Zealand', the campaign draws from the insight that morning is an important time of the day for Indians, as well as for New Zealanders. As part of the campaign a yearlong content series has been released with 'Good Morning World' messages shared by locals welcoming

faster processing of visitor visa applications for Indian leisure travellers. The new arrangement provides Indian leisure travellers a more streamlined visa service with a faster processing time of seven working days.

Steven Dixon, Regional Trade Marketing Manager- Asia, Tourism New Zealand said, "The extension of this programme is

Kesari Tours and Veena World. Between the three new partners, Indian visitors can now get expedited visitor visa processing in 60 additional locations across India."

The Tourism Industry Partnership was originally launched in November 2014. Valid only for incentive visas in the first year, a grand total of 876 applications



visitors from their favourite spots across the country.

To coincide with the brand launch, Tourism New Zealand and Immigration New Zealand together launched an extension of the Tourism Industry Partnership (TIP) Programme to facilitate

built on the success of our existing partnerships over the last five years. We are grateful to continue our association with Kulin Kumar Holidays, SOTC Travel and Thomas Cook India and we are looking forward to welcoming many more Indian leisure travellers by adding Flamingo Transworld,

were processed. Last year, during the period of June 2018-July 2019, more than 5,000 (5,492) applications (which included incentive and leisure visas) were processed under the partnership, which is a positive 627 per cent increase compared to the first year.



# The famous Gouda Cheese Market

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# Top 10 things to do in RAK

A hidden gem in northernmost UAE, Ras Al Khaimah is a dream destination for all travellers. The emirate boasts of magnificent landscapes featuring breathtaking coastlines, terracotta desert planes, and the Hajar mountain range with the UAE's highest peak – Jebel Jais. With year-long sunshine & 64 kms of white beaches, RAK offers a unique experience.

 Hazel Jain



## Jebel Jais Flight

The Jebel Jais Flight is the world's longest zipline and a bucket-list attraction for tourists around the world. Those who wish to take the plunge will get to travel at speeds of 120kph to 150kph, 1,680 metres above sea level. Fitted with a special harness, visitors will have the chance to experience the thrill for two to three minutes.



## Jais Sky Tour

Covering a total distance of 5 kms via a series of seven zip lines ranging from 337 metres to just over a kilometre, the Jais Sky Tour will give visitors a panoramic, bird's eye view of the towering Hajar Mountains. They will navigate their way through the sky averaging speeds of 60 kmph and find themselves at UAE's highest sky bridge, 1,250m above sea level.



## Jebel Jais Viewing Deck Park

Viewing Deck Park is open from 8am-8pm on weekdays and 8am-11pm on weekends. The 22,730 sqm park features seven viewing decks complete with 12 binoculars. It offers visitors an opportunity to enjoy superb vistas of the Arabian Gulf and Al Hajar Mountain valley from 1,250 m above sea level.



## RAK Museum

The National Museum of Ras Al Khaimah houses a collection of archaeological and ethnological artefacts. Interesting items include documents, manuscripts and treaties between the rulers of RAK and Great Britain. There are also exhibits of traditional weapons belonging to the ruling family and archaeological displays about the earliest settlers in the area.



## Suwaidi Pearls Farm

Abdullah Al Suwaidi set up the region's first cultured pearl farm. It is located on a sliver alongside the sea and the mountains that Al Rams nestles. Here, visitors can learn the techniques of pearl farming and actually try opening an oyster.



## Miss Teak Cruise

Tourists can cruise their way on the vibrant waters of the Arabian Sea on a traditionally decorated wooden dhow (yacht) along the virgin beach for Al Marjan Island, as they take in picturesque views of the city such as the pyramid building at Bab Al Bahr. This allows visitors to take in the amazing views of water and the surroundings.



## Kayaking in mangroves

Mangroves and salt flats form a large part of the coastal and inland landscape of RAK. They are home to a variety of fauna including flamingoes, and extend right to the centre of Ras Al Khaimah. One can take kayak excursions to explore the mangroves.



## Al Wadi Equestrian Adventure Centre

The Ritz-Carlton RAK resort's equestrian centre offers lessons and experiences for guests of all age and skill levels. Guests can enjoy a range of activities, including camel riding and horse riding, or simply take the little ones for a fun interactive experience with the ponies.



## Wadi Showka

For the adventurous, mountain biking in Wadi Showka offers that added adrenaline rush and excitement. Expect endless routes of downhill and uphill thrills passing through local farms and wild camels. Guests can also join the guided group ride at sunrise. Visitors can also indulge in a mix of canyoning and hiking.



## Bedouin Oasis Camp

This secret haven has been designed for discerning customers looking for a traditional experience of the Arabian desert, fused with luxury. The Bedouin Oasis is an authentic reproduction of Bedouin life as it used to be. The experience includes activities like dune-bashing, sand-board-ing, barbeque dinners, and even an overnight stay in Bedouin-style tents.



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# SriLankan adds new Indian points

**V Ravindran**, Regional Manager - India & Bangladesh, SriLankan Airlines, says that India remains their top source market and hence they are increasing frequencies to existing locations in the country, while looking to add Calicut and Ahmedabad to their network by the end of this year, which would boost MICE movement further.



Nisha Verma

India is a prominent market for Sri Lanka and SriLankan Airlines, claims **V Ravindran**. "We operate in 11 destinations in India. In some of the metros like Chennai, Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru, we have at least double-daily flights. At other stations, we have a minimum of three flights and at some, we have daily flights. That's how important India is as a source market for Sri Lanka," he says.

Since September 2019, Ravindran adds, the Indian market has performed extremely well in terms of both passenger numbers and revenue gener-

ated. While the former led the airline to increase frequency, especially in Delhi where it now



**V Ravindran**  
Regional Manager - India & Bangladesh, SriLankan Airlines

has 21 flights a week instead of 18, the latter was primarily on account of "fantastic performance of the sales team."



After the unfortunate incident in Colombo in April 2019, India was the quickest market to

✂ We are giving two per cent commission to travel agents. Without them, it is very difficult to manage ✂

bounce back for Sri Lanka. "In December 2019, tourist arrivals from India grew compared to December 2018. Hence, we

11/11, which is catching up globally as 'Single's Day'. In addition, Ravindran says, they are focusing on MICE move-



are grateful to Indian tourists," Ravindran shares.

SriLankan's strategy is to promote both the airline and the destination through various mediums such as direct consumer marketing campaigns, special promotions, special event promotions, festival promotions, and even anniversaries and special dates like

ment from India. "We have some new destinations to be added as per business plan, subject to aircraft procurement. Hence, Ahmedabad and Calicut are going to be the latest Indian destinations to be connected via SriLankan. With that, we are going to fly to 11 destinations in India, and we will start a minimum of four flights a week. We also have plans to

operate to Sydney. We are already flying four daily flights to Melbourne. This will be a good product for the Indian leisure market specifically to Australia," he says.

Insisting that travel agents are one of the main stakeholders for them, Ravindran shares, "We are giving two per cent commission to travel agents. We try to make any fares or offers available to them because their reach is more. It is fair to say that without travel agents, it is very difficult to manage. We have some plans in terms of promotions as well."

On the COVID-19 outbreak, he says, "People are reluctant to travel, and we need to monitor and see if there are cancellations. We are cautious and taking all possible action to prevent the spread, if any." ✂



*Mount Everest has shut down for the rest of the expedition season because of the coronavirus outbreak. Nepal's government announced that it would cancel all climbing permits from 14 March until 30 April.*

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## India in focus for Azerbaijan

India was in the top 10 list of source countries for Azerbaijan in 2019. Ease in visa procedures and its popularity as a wedding paradise have helped the destination win tourists, but there is still a lot to explore.



Hazel Jain

Year 2019 was the first time that Azerbaijan hit the three million global visitor mark. It was also the first year that India made it to its top 10 international source markets. Sharing this is **Florian Sengstschmid**, CEO of Azerbaijan Tourism Board, who says, "We received 3.2 million visitors in 2019 from all over the world, which was a growth of 12 per cent. India especially showed an amazing growth rate of almost 70 per cent as compared to 2018. We welcomed 65,000 Indian visitors in 2019, pushing India to the top 10 list of international visitors for 2019. We think there is still a lot of scope to grow this market."

Speaking about the segments that did incredibly well, he adds,



**Florian Sengstschmid**  
CEO, Azerbaijan Tourism Board

"The wedding segment did very well for us in 2019. Weddings in Azerbaijan are as important to us as they are in India, and we can offer everything from horses to fire shows. We hosted several big weddings in Baku last year. In fact, Indian wedding planners have already settled in Baku. We are also promoting skiing in our country. Since we have nine out of 11 climate zones in a small

territory, travelling is also easy." The Azerbaijan Tourism Board is also promoting special interest travellers for activities such as kite-surfing, bird watching, as well as health and wellness. The country offers the e-visa facility for Indian nationals. The Board

✂ We welcomed 65,000 Indian visitors in 2019, pushing India to the top 10 list of international visitors for 2019 ✂

is also working towards finalising a three-city roadshow across Delhi, Ahmedabad and Mumbai, with the aim of connecting with tour operators," he says. ✂



*According to HVS India Hospitality Overview 2019, Chandigarh recorded the highest growth in RevPAR (12.3%) in 2019. However, Mumbai continued to record the highest RevPAR of ₹ 6,464 in 2019.*



# Travel in the time of COVID-19

The COVID-19 outbreak has taken the entire world by storm, and has dealt a big blow to the travel and tourism industry across the world. Here's how a few trade associations and travel companies are responding to the chaos that has followed after the spread of the virus. This will also help agents advise their clients accordingly.



**Jyoti Mayal**  
President, TAAI

“The travel industry understands the severity of the virus and has been taking measures to ensure the safety of its customers. For instance, leading visa service provider VFS Global is discounting their optional services such as doorstep visa and even the courier return services, so customers don't have to step out and go to visa application centres. They can now do this in the comfort and safety of their own homes.”

“Summer is the peak travel period in India. But due to the current situation we can anticipate a drop of 20-25 per cent in future bookings for Southeast Asia and Italy. They are wary of making fresh bookings to the affected locations and airfares to these places have dropped by 20-30 per cent. We have received 35 per cent of cancellation queries from clients visiting international destinations.”



**Sabina Chopra**  
Co-founder and COO, Corporate Travel & Head Industry Relations, Yatra.com

“Refund on cancellation of flights and hotel bookings is definitely being provided to the travellers by the respective airlines and hotels. As an organisation striving towards making travel safer for customers, we are providing medical hospitalisation and cancellation benefits to travellers whose travel bookings were undertaken prior to the issuance of Government of India's advisory.”



**Dev Karvat**  
Founder & CEO - India & Emerging Markets  
TravelTag Cover-More

“With the safety of our travellers as the primary goal, the Globus family believes in giving them more time and flexibility with the travel decisions. We are monitoring the situation to determine if additional modifications and updates are needed regarding advisements and policies. We are offering an interim policy for our travellers and agents to adjust travel plans and help alleviate immediate concerns.”



**Varesh Chopra**  
Regional Director - South Asia & Middle East  
Globus family of brands



**Steve Odell**  
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“We see that the slowdown in business is as high as 45-50 per cent. Travellers, at least for leisure, are not travelling. The business traveller is also wary and trying to postpone his trip. With the exception of China, HK and Iran where flights are not operating, other airlines are offering a waiver on change in travel date but not on cancellations. We have postponed our convention to and we may look at a different destination.”



**Pradip Lulla**  
Acting President & VP, TAFI  
Inputs by Hazel Jain

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IITE	Bhubaneswar	20-22
Korea Tourism Webinar	Pan India	25
WTM Latin America	Sao Paulo	31-Apr 2

## APRIL 2020

Korea Tourism Webinar	Pan India	3
Travel Nevada Webinar	Pan India	8
Korea Tourism Webinar	Pan India	9
India Tourism Conclave by CEPR	Delhi	21
International Conference on Rural Tourism	Dehradun	24-27
IATO Election	Delhi	25

## MAY 2020

ILTM Latin America	Sao Paulo	5-8
Africa's Travel Indaba	Durban	12-14
ILTM Asia Pacific	Singapore	31-Jun 3

## JUNE 2020

British Travel & Tourism Show	Birmingham	11-12
IATA AGM	Amsterdam	22-23
Arabian Travel Market (ATM)	Dubai	28-Jul 1

## JULY 2020

TTF	Kolkata	3-5
International Conference on Tourism & Hospitality	Singapore	6-7
TTF South	Hyderabad	10-11
HICSA 2020	Mumbai	22-23

## AUGUST 2020

Digital Travel Summit APAC 2020	Sentosa	17-19
India 2020 Tourism-Travel & Hospitality Event	Busan, Korea	20-21
International Conference on Sustainable Tourism	Kolkata	21-22
IBTM China	Beijing	26-27

## SEPTEMBER 2020

UITT 2020	Kyiv, Ukraine	1-3
COTTM	Beijing	9-11
KITF	Almaty	24-26

For more information, contact us at: [talk@ddppl.com](mailto:talk@ddppl.com)

# ASSOCIATION TALK

## ATOAI bats for Uttarakhand

Captain Swadesh Kumar, President, Adventure Tour Operators Association of India (ATOAI), shares that he recently got a chance of putting forth the issues of adventure tour industry in front of the Chief Minister of Uttarakhand for consideration.



Nisha Verma

Captain Swadesh Kumar represented the entire adventure tourism industry in the country and shared some points with the CM on how they can boost business in the adventure sector



in the state. "The best part is, he accepted all my suggestions and agreed to take action on the same by March 31," he said.

Sharing details, he added, "My first recommendation was to get the Nanda Devi sanctuary opened. It was closed in 1982 for 10 years for ecology reasons, but



Captain Swadesh Kumar  
President, ATOAI

nobody has opened it till now. If it is opened, there will be employment opportunities for the locals and also the pressure would be released on the Gangotri area, which is inundated by visitors."

He also urged the CM to get the four pilgrimages of Gangotri, Yamunotri, Kedarnath and Badrinath temples to open for 12 months. "Earlier the roads were bad and there was no

technology to clear the snow, but now things are better," he added. Kumar revealed that they have requested the Uttarakhand government to not charge booking fee to the tour operators for climbing or trekking expeditions. "The CM agreed to consider our request of not charging any booking fee,

They accepted all our suggestions and agreed to take action on the same by March 31

which goes to the tune of 65k for expeditions. We have also asked him to open new trekking routes in the area and promote the same," he informed.

He mentioned that there are no rescue centres in the country, and hence they have made a request to create rescue centres for Uttarkashi, Joshimath, where the climbing expeditions and trekking are going on. Insisting that the most crucial thing is promotion of tourism in Uttarakhand, he said, "There is no scheme where you can help the industry in Uttarakhand to promote the products. Hence, I suggested that they can do something similar to MOT's MDA scheme at the state level. I also told them to participate in the travel and tourism fairs across the country and the world. There should be aggressive marketing with the government going with the industry and sell packages on the spot. I am sure that if these ideas succeed in Uttarakhand, they can be duplicated in other states as well."

## Choking travel won't curb spread

World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) has said that closing borders, blanket travel bans and more extreme government policies will not stop the spread of coronavirus.



Nisha Verma

Gloria Guevara, President & CEO of WTTC and former Tourism Minister of Mexico, has urged governments and authorities worldwide not to overreact with disproportionate measures in a bid to control COVID-19. She says, "Governments and those in authority must not seek to choke travel and trade at this time. Closing borders, imposing

We urge governments to explore fact-based measures which don't affect majority of people

blanket travel bans and implementing extreme policies are not the answer to stopping the spread of coronavirus."

She added, "Past experience shows that taking such extreme action has been ineffective at best. We urge governments to explore fact-based measures which don't affect majority of people and businesses for whom travel is essential."

COVID-19 has a lower mortality rate than previous viral outbreaks such as SARS in 2003 and MERS in 2012. Guevara



Gloria Guevara  
President & CEO, WTTC

said, "We understand there is huge concern about COVID-19. However, fatality rates remain very low and the chances of contracting the virus, for majority of people, are very remote if they travel responsibly."

**Form - IV**  
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I, SanJeet, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.  
Date : 01/03/2020  
Sd/-  
SanJeet  
Signature of the Publisher

## An evening with Japanese food



Working actively to raise awareness about Japanese food and Sake (Rice Wine) in India, Satoshi Suzuki, Ambassador of Japan to India, hosted An Evening with Japanese Food 2020' at his residence in New Delhi, to promote Japanese food in India.



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Room type : 1 unit Deluxe Pool Side  
Period stay: July 2020 (3 nights)

**Inclusions minimum of 3 nights stay:**

- Daily Breakfast for 2 pax at Point Break Restaurant
- 1 x a 60 minutes Balinese massage for 2 pax at X2 SPA
- 1 x a romantic dinner 3 courses set menu for 2 persons
- 1 x 60 minutes free flow beverage at Beach house (Beer/Cocktail/Juice)
- A romantic villa decoration with folding swan on the bed and flower petal bed
- Honeymoon cake
- Fruit Basket

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Villa type: 1 unit One Bedroom Deluxe Pool Villa  
Period stay: July 2020 (3 nights)

**Inclusions minimum of 3 nights stay:**

- Daily Breakfast for 2 pax at Point Break Restaurant
- 1 x a 60 minutes massage for 2 pax at X2 SPA (advance reservation require)
- 1 x a romantic dinner 4 courses set menu for 2 persons at the villa or pool side (advance reservation require)
- A bottle of house wine upon arrival
- One way Airport transfer drop off OR pick up
- A romantic villa decoration with folding swan on the bed and flower petal in the bathtub.
- 1 x a romantic floating breakfast for 2 persons at the villa (advance reservation require)
- Other refer to villa standard inclusions.

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## TOURISM AUTHORITY OF THAILAND

### New Delhi

**Vachirachai Sirisumpan** has been appointed as the new Director of Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) New Delhi Office. He has been with TAT for more than 20 years with extensive experience working in various divisions, including International Relations - Europe, Middle East and Africa Markets, Domestic Marketing, and Policy and Planning. Prior to his assignment to head the TAT Delhi Office, he was the Director of Southern Market Division promoting and coordinating Thailand's southern region for domestic tourism. In his previous assignment, Sirisumpan had been posted at TAT Dubai as Deputy Director for Middle East.



## NOVOTEL HOTEL

### Ahmedabad

Novotel Ahmedabad has appointed **Jayakrishnan Sudhakaran** as the new General Manager. Jay brings with him 20 years of expertise in sales, marketing and operations. Prior to joining Novotel Ahmedabad, Jay was the hotel manager at Novotel Ibis Chennai OMR. He has been associated with Accor for the past five years. He cleared the prestigious IHMP program in 2018 and this is his first project as a General Manager of a hotel. He began his journey with Taj President Hotel, Mumbai in banqueting and later moved to be a part of hospitality brands such as InterContinental Hotels, The Carlson Hotels and the Zuri Hotels & Resorts in various capacities within sales.



## ROYAL ORCHID HOTELS

### Bengaluru

**Shinoj Joseph** has been promoted as Area General Manager for North Bengaluru and airport region for Royal Orchid Hotels. He has been with Royal Orchid Hotels since 2017 and was earlier also the General Manager for Hotel Royal Orchid Suites - Whitefield. He has been awarded for his dedication to the industry and the various brands he has worked for. Joseph has over two decades of experience in the hospitality domain, especially in mid-segment hotels. In the new role, he will ensure that Royal Orchid Hotels continues to make a mark for itself in the Bengaluru region, ensuring all hotels are well-positioned to meet customer demands.



## ALTAIR HOTEL

### Kolkata

**Ayan Mitra** is the new General Manager of the boutique hotel, AltAir, which is strategically located near Sector V of Salt Lake in Kolkata. Mitra has been handed over the role to maintain the grandeur of the boutique hotel built by the Neotia Group. He was earlier the General Manager of The Stadel Kolkata. He also led the bar & beverage operation of Swissôtel. An IHMITE pass out, Mitra started his endeavour with ITC Sonar, Kolkata followed by The Park, Kolkata and Kenilworth hotel. He achieved another milestone in his career with his association with Best Western group of hotels, Chandigarh as Food & Beverage Manager.



## IBIS CITY CENTRE

### Coimbatore

**Sandip Satange** has been appointed as Hotel Manager at ibis Coimbatore City Centre. Satange brings with him a rich international hospitality experience with over 11 years across global hospitality brands in India, USA and UK, including stints with ibis London Shepherd's Bush and ibis London Heathrow. His journey with Accor started in 2010 as the F&B Team Leader of ibis London Heathrow. During this course, he successfully led the pre-opening of four hotels and was one of the key members of the pre-opening team of ibis Chennai Sipcot. He also spearheaded the opening and launch of Holiday Inn Express, Bengaluru Whitefield as Hotel Manager.



## FOUR POINTS BY SHERATON

### Bengaluru

**Kadambari Sabharwal** Talwar has been appointed as the Hotel Manager at Four Points by Sheraton Bengaluru Whitefield. With over 18 years of experience, Talwar is an outstanding hospitality professional. In her current role, she will be spearheading many initiatives that guarantee exceptional guest service and financial profitability. Prior to this, she was the Market Director of Sales & Marketing at Marriott in Bengaluru. She started her career with the Renaissance Mumbai Convention Center and then began her stint with Marriott. She has a bachelor's degree in Hotel Management from the Institute of Hotel Management, Aurangabad.



## THE MANOHAR HOTEL

### Hyderabad

**Chandan Kumar Chanchal** has been appointed as General Manager at The Manohar-Hyderabad hotel. He brings with him over 16 years of experience in the hospitality industry, with core competency in sales and marketing. He has previously been associated with other reputed brands like Hyatt, Radisson, Holiday Inn, Sarovar Hotels, and The Lalit. In the new role at The Manohar-Hyderabad, Chanchal will oversee overall hotel operations by providing strategic guidance to the team. He will ensure that all operational and budgetary goals are met, and that customer satisfaction is top priority in delivering a quality experience to guests.



## RENAISSANCE CONVENTION CENTRE

### Mumbai

Renaissance Mumbai has recently announced the appointment of **Bjorn Fernandes** as the Director of Sales & Marketing for Renaissance Mumbai Convention Centre Hotel & Lakeside Chalet, Mumbai - Marriott Executive Apartments. In the new role, Fernandes will help position the hotel among the leading ones in the city, with the immense amount of experience he brings to the hotel. Prior to this new appointment, Fernandes was appointed as the Market Director of Revenue Management - Mumbai Cluster for Marriott International. He has been part of the Marriott family for a decade now.



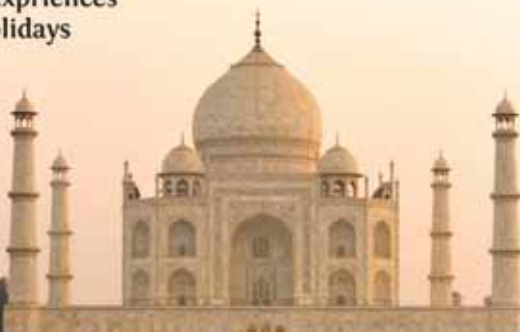
## THE WESTIN GARDEN CITY

### Mumbai

**Shalin Jose** has been appointed as the new Director of Spa at The Westin Mumbai Garden City. With over 16 years of experience in the wellness industry, Jose's abilities span every facet of the industry, including management, concept development, marketing, branding and business development. He brings with him a wealth of knowledge to the position and prior to joining The Westin Mumbai Garden City, was Spa Director for the Starwood Hotels and Resorts for three years. In the new role, Jose will be responsible for the efficient running of all existing spa facilities within Westin Mumbai's portfolio.



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# MOT's multilingual website

Prahlad Singh Patel, Minister of State (I/C) for Tourism & Culture, recently launched the multilingual Incredible India website in New Delhi, wherein information will now also be available in Chinese, Arabic and Spanish. More languages will be introduced in the future.



Nisha Verma

The Minister launched the website in the presence of Yogendra Tripathi, Secretary, Tourism; Meenakshi Sharma, Director General, Tourism; Rakesh Verma, Joint Secretary, Tourism; Rupinder Brar, Additional Director General, Tourism; and G Kamala Vardhana Rao, CMD, ITDC, and other senior officials of the Ministry.

## Multilingual website

Speaking on the occasion, Patel, said, "Our targets are very clear. We want to showcase the diversity in the nation, in terms of language, dresses or food, which are the biggest identi-

ties of our cultural heritage. The tourists, both domestic and foreign, come to see this diversity. We should learn to cater to their tastes and interests, and the same shall be visible on our website. In 2019, India witnessed the arrival of more than 10.9 million foreign tourists, of which about 6 lakh people speak Chinese, about 2 lakh speak Arabic, and about 1 lakh 25 thousand speak Spanish. Hence, apart from English and Hindi, we have given space to these three languages on the website, so that they can take a better decision."

Sharing more details on the website, Meenakshi Sharma, said, "The website is quite

provisioned on the website through 360 degree-experience-based walk-throughs and stories and experiences related to food & cuisine, heritage, nature and wildlife, luxury, spiritual, adventure, art, shopping and much more. He added, "MOT's Incredible India 2.0 website aims towards showcasing the varied tourism products of India at a global arena by providing visitors with relevant, personalised and contextual digital experience escalating tourism awareness, attraction and opportunities."

## 2021: Visit India Year?

Patel also added that while they want to promote domestic tourism in India in 2020, and he said that they are thinking of de-

the world, India is still much safer. "I believe that a lot of efficiency and responsibility has been visible in the kind of safety procedures being adopted at all our international airports. This has taken the respect for our country at higher level. This is a topic of grave concern, which needs to be monitored and analysed closely. The team is doing just that," he claimed.

Sharma added that they will keep promoting India the way they had been, but this is the time where "everybody shall take a deep breath, wait for the crisis to get over and walk forward, while taking proper measures."

## Overseas agencies

MOT is already in process of signing agencies to handle its overseas promotions. Sharma shared, "We are working on having one agency in Australia and one is already working with China, which we have not been able to sign yet, but we will be signing later. There will also be

✂ We want people across the world to know India and see its cultural heritage and its attractions. In order to showcase that, we are in discussion to declare 2021 as Visit India Year ✂

one in South Africa. In all our eight offices, we have agencies coming in very soon. By April, when the new financial year starts, we should have at least four agencies in four offices." ✂



ties of our cultural heritage. The tourists, both domestic and foreign, come to see this diversity. We should learn to cater to their tastes and interests, and the same shall be visible on our website. In 2019, India witnessed the arrival of more than 10.9 million foreign tourists, of which about 6 lakh people speak Chinese, about 2 lakh speak Arabic, and about 1 lakh 25 thousand speak Spanish. Hence, apart from English and Hindi, we have given space to these three languages on the website, so that they can take a better decision."

He revealed that the immer-

sive experience-based content comprehensive, considering that Indian has so much to offer. It has almost 1 million words in each of the versions, covering 165 destinations, 24 experiences, smaller websites on the Land of Gandhi, Land of Buddha, and a lot of experimental content—crafted in India, 3D walkthrough, museums, world heritage sites, etc. We are also working on French, Japanese and Korean languages, which will be unveiled in future."

## Translation of signages

To help tourists from Sri Lanka, MOT has got signages put up in Sanchi in Sinhalese language, which is the native language of the island nation, revealed

claring 2021 as Visit India Year, with an aim to invite people across the world to the country and showcase its diversity. "We want people across the world to know India and see its cultural heritage and its attractions. In order to showcase that we are in discussion to declare 2021 as Visit India Year. We want to make the new multilingual website and language facilities at important tourist sites, act as facilities to attract tourists from different countries across the world," he shared.

## Coronavirus scare

The Minister said that while everyone is aware about Coronavirus and its impact around



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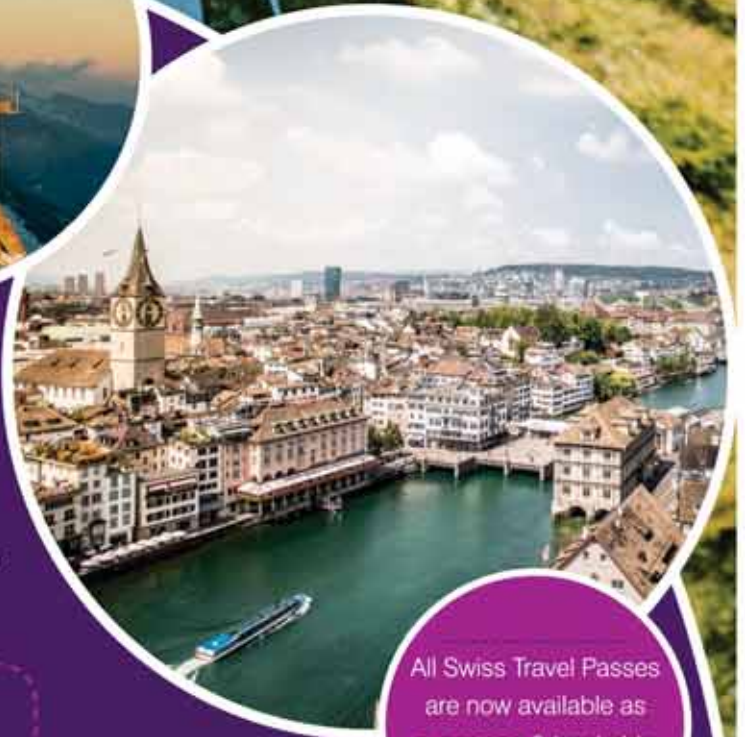
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